

'Alex' seals lucky win for Wycombe

WYCOMBE Wanderers scraped through to the semi-final of the Rothmans Isthmian League Subsidiary Cup on Thursday night with a lucky win over Chesham United at the Meadow. An 89th minute goal by Dave Alexander clinched a victory that was scarcely deserved and a place in the last four against either Slough or Harrow at home (writes Stuart Earp).

Local rivals Chesham were desperately unlucky to lose out. They played the better football, worked a good deal harder but missed a string of chances that eventually cost them dearly. Blues goalkeeper Peter Spittle did much to keep them at bay with some fine saves but Peter was one of the few Wycombe successes on the night.

As a team, Wanderers looked tired and jaded and there was a certain amount of lack of effort at times. In contrast, United hardly stopped running for a minute and induced many errors from the visitors. A bone hard pitch didn't help but Chesham adapted far better to the conditions and gave the Wycombe

Chesham United 1, Wycombe Wanderers 2

back four real problems.

The lack of pace in the middle of the Wycombe defence was often exposed by the nippy Stewart Atkins who thrived on the long ball service from his colleagues. Atkins must have had half a dozen chances to find the net but he was either off target or foiled by the alert Spittle.

Atkins' first chance came after five minutes when he outpaced the defence and turned in a shot which the goalkeeper did well to parry. Spittle then saved well from Stan Marshall and watched Atkins' shot go past the far post minutes later.

It was against the run of play then, that Wanderers went ahead after 24 minutes. Gordon Taylor fouled Geoff Anthony on the bye-line. Howard Kennedy drove over a low free kick and Dave Bullock met the ball first time to give Laurie Cole no chance with a firm shot.

The goal did little to lift Wanderers who were put under pressure constantly by United's constant harassing. This meant defenders could do little but punt the ball high upfield, bypassing the midfield men all too regularly and putting extra work on the forwards who were unable to cope.

In the 40th minute Chesham pulled back a deserved equaliser following a mistake by John Delaney. His back pass to Spittle was short and although he tried to shield the ball from Marshall, the Chesham striker slid in a shot which sailed over the 'keeper and into the net.

Before half time, the game was held up when a broken glass was cleared from the Wycombe goalmouth. This also happened in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup semi-final at Chesham and this time the crowd behind the goal were moved away from the area. The culprit achieved no purpose at all — except discrediting his club.

The first half pattern continued after the interval and both Barry Cooper and Ken Beaven went close in the early stages. Alexander put in one of Wycombe's all-too-rare strikes at goal with a fine left foot shot on the turn which forced Cole full length.

But it was Chesham who looked the more likely scorers and Spittle again pulled off a great save to thwart Atkins in the 59th minute. Wanderers moved Delaney up front when Ray Eaton replaced Anthony after 65 minutes. Bullock switching to

centre back. Eaton soon made an impact when he caught the defence napping with a quick throw to Mick Holifield but Cole parried Mick's powerful shot.

Chesham netted in the 75th minute through Bobby Harper following yet another good stop by Spittle from Atkins but referee Peter Knock saw Harper clearly handle the ball.

With Wanderers showing few signs of improvement in the closing stages, we seemed destined for half an hour's extra time. There was only a minute remaining when Wycombe mounted their last attack. Kennedy was in possession but faced by a wall of Chesham defenders when he spotted Alexander on the right. 'Alex' ran well onto a perfectly placed chip and crashed home a swerving first time drive past Cole. It was a cracking goal to seal the result but few would argue that the Blues were fortunate indeed to get through.

CHESHAM: L. Cole; G. Taylor, P. Johnson, V. Faulkner, I. Hornby; B. Cooper, K. Beaven, A. Cameron; D. Le Sage (sub R. Harper 55 mins), S. Atkins, S. Marshall.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, D. Bullock; D. Alexander, T. Reardon, H. Kennedy; G. Anthony (sub R. Eaton 65 mins), B. Macrae, M. Holifield.

Referee: P. Knock (Reading).

Half-time: 1-1. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Bullock (24), Alexander (89). Chesham — Marshall (40).



DAVE ALEXANDER
... late winner